

Man Does Not Live By Bread Alone

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

We sing “Come Ye Thankful People Come.” We sing “Now Thank We All Our God.” This past week, when you really listen to the people on the news, the retailers, and even some of our neighbors, perhaps they are not boldly crying out, but at least with great murmuring, it has been suggested that our economy is giving us less and less for which to be thankful this year.

We hear the outcry, “My 401k has become a 201k.” The banks have let us down. The government has let us down. The one good thing about living in a world where the media and the powers-that-be have all but abandoned God as being tangibly present is that I haven’t heard God getting the blame for what has happened to our economy. I suppose that is the silver lining.

And God does not deserve the blame. Chaos, destruction, war, famine, and pestilence, like death are the wages of sin. Now this doesn’t mean that God isn’t in control. All things happen according to His good and gracious will. And we pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In our Old Testament reading, we heard of how God humbled

and disciplined the Israelites for 40 years. God allowed them to get hungry, then He provided manna. God allowed them to get thirsty, then He had Moses bring forth water from a rock. Having traveled in the wilderness of that region, dying of thirst or starvation was a real fear. It is barren. You can drive for miles and miles and see nothing green. For the Israelites, survival was only possible because God was providing for His children.

Nothing has changed. Without God providing for us; without His angels defending us from all that Satan would do to torment us, we would have no food, no water, no life. Even worse, we would have no hope for salvation or the life to come.

Those in the secular world – those who do not know God or have any appreciation for all He has done for us – if they say we have less for which to be thankful, it is because their entire reality revolves around that which is material, and they don't understand what's truly important.

However, I believe that, even from a secular sense, genuine thankfulness increases as things get taken away. One of my favorite quotes is from Dick Cavett who once said, "Health, wealth, and sleep are three things only truly appreciated after they are interrupted." It's very true.

As God's people, we are to have a different view than the

world when it comes to that for which we are thankful. Our current situation in our society gives us an opportunity to share with the world an attitude toward material goods which God's people were always to have. Like Paul, we are to be content in every situation – whether we are hungry or if we have plenty. The reality is, that in the near future, tomorrow in particular, hunger is not going to be an issue for any of us who are here tonight. Now that doesn't mean that there is not hunger in this world – even in our own community. We are gathering food for Quanaada for a reason. But I know in my case, as you can tell, I haven't missed too many meals.

What would the outcry be in our society if mainstream America actually started experiencing hunger? It is a frightening thought. But our prayer must not change: "Give us this day our daily bread."

But if we really want to look at true hunger and thirst, don't look at the quantity of food and drink consumed. Rather, look at hunger and thirst from a spiritual point of view.

Christ is the Bread, the manna, that came down from heaven. He is the Bread of Life, and the vast majority of our world, spiritually starving as they are, pass Him by looking for something else to fill them. And they grumble and they murmur as the Israelites did

those 40 years in the wilderness, because those outside the Kingdom of God cannot find peace and hope and contentment.

And just like with those grumbling, complaining Israelites, God provides daily bread for them – even to all evil people, as Luther says in the Catechism.

The better news is God provides the Bread of Life – even to all sinful people, as He says in Holy Scripture. And even though we sometimes grumble and complain, He is leading us into the Promised Land.

Thanksgiving Day is associated with having a feast. And tomorrow, we will feast and give thanks to God for all those things listed in Luther's Catechism – clothing and shoes, food and drink, etc.

But there is a greater feast to come. And at that coming, even all evil people will see why, in this life, God's children can have peace and hope and contentment even when our 401k becomes a 201k. Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Amen.